Clean Version

In The Specification:

Please replace the Title of Invention at page 1, lines 1-2 with the following title:

METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR THE REMOTE INSPECTION OF POSTAGE METERS

Please replace the paragraph at page 1, line 21 to page 2, line 7 with the following paragraph:

In connection with the introduction of the cryptographically secure postage metering systems, the USPS is requiring that a remote inspection of these systems be implemented to verify 1) the location of the metering system, 2) the integrity of the cryptographically secured indicium, and 3) the integrity of the ascending and descending accounting register values. In at least one scenario, the USPS has suggested that in order to verify the location of the postage metering system the use of an indicium card is acceptable. The indicium card is sent by either the USPS or the metering system manufacturer (sender) to the registered address of the postage metering system. Upon receipt of the indicium card, the registered user of the metering system prints a zero dollar value indicia and returns the indicium card to the sender. The sender can then perform the standard cryptographic verification of the indicium to verify that it was printed by the appropriate metering system. If the verification is successfully completed, the sender assumes that the metering system is physically located at the address to which the inspection card was sent. The problem with this system is that a duplicate indicium card can be created and a valid indicium printed thereon even if the metering system is not located at its registered location. Moreover, the return of the indicium card is a manual process that is inefficient and prone to human error.

a1

Pleas replace the paragraph at pag 3, line 10 to page 3, line 24 with the following paragraph:

Referring to Figure 1, a postage metering remote inspection system is shown at 200. Inspection system 200 includes a postage metering system, shown generally at 202 (in enlarged detail), having a personal computer 204 connected to a monitor 206, a keyboard 208, and a printer 210. The personal computer 204 additionally includes a processing subsystem 212 having an associated memory 214. The processing subsystem 212 is connected to a communications port 216 for communication with a secure postage meter accounting subsystem 218 and a modem 220 for communicating with a remote facility or data center 222. It should be recognized that many variations in the organization and structure of the personal computer 204 as well as the secure postage metering accounting subsystem 218 could be implemented. As an example, the communications from the modem 220 to the remote facility 222 can be by way of hardwire, radio frequency, or other communications including the Internet. The postage metering accounting subsystem 218 may take many forms such as, for example, a secure vault type system, or a secure smart card system.

A2

Please replace the paragraph at page 4, line 14 to page 5, line 10 with the following paragraph:

Referring to Figures 1 and 2, the operation of the postage metering system 202 in generating and printing a known cryptographically secure postage indicium on a mailpiece will be explained. At step S1, a user generates a mailpiece utilizing an application program stored in memory 214. Upon completion of the mailpiece the user can elect to have postage applied thereto by clicking on an icon appearing on monitor 206 or alternatively pressing a special function key of keyboard 208 (step S3). In either case, once the postage application option has been elected, the personal computer 204 sends such request together with the requested postage amount to the postage metering accounting subsystem 218 via the communication

A3

p rts 216 and 234 (step S5) At step S7, the postage metering subsyst m 218 d t rmines if sufficient funds are available in th accounting circuitry 248 to pay for the requested postage. If the answer at step S7 is "NO" the request is rejected and the user is notified of such rejection via the monitor 206 (step S9). On the other hand, if the answer at step S7 is "YES" the amount of the postage to be dispensed is deducted within the accounting circuitry 248 (step S11). At step S13 the first cryptographic module 228 utilizes the key data 246 to create a verifiable and cryptographically secure message which will be included as part of the printed postage indicium. The generation of the secure message can be accomplished in a known manner using either public key cryptography or secret key cryptography. The first cryptographic module 228 and the key data 246 would be conventionally configured to accommodate the selected secret or public key cryptographic system. At step S15 the indicium image is then generated using the indicium image data and program 252 and the indicium image including the verifiable and cryptographically secure message are sent via the computer 204 to the printer 210 for printing on a mailpiece such as an envelope. The above description relative to the generation of the postage indicium with the cryptographic message and operation of the postage metering system is known such that a further detailed discussion is not considered warranted.

Please replace the paragraph at page 5, line 11 to page 6, line 5 with the following paragraph:

Referring to Figures 1 and 3, the operation of the postage metering inspection system in securely determining the location of the postage metering system 202 will be described. The data center 222, which can be either the USPS or the postage metering system 202 vendor, includes a central processing unit 262 for performing the functions set forth below, memory 264 having stored therein the inspection programming 264a and the secret inspection key 264b, a cryptographic engine 266 which is the same as the second cryptographic engine 258 in accounting module

218, and stored postage meter data 270. The postage meter data 270 includes data associated with each postage meter ring system 202 such as it serial number, registered address location, next inspection date, ascending and descending register information, a flag which can be set to identify that a postage metering system 202 location inspection is due, and any other data required by the postal service. In operation, the data center utilizes CPU 262 and inspection program 264a to evaluate the postage meter data 270 to identify when a postage metering system 202 requires a remote meter location inspection (step S20). Upon determination of the required location inspection, a flag is set at the data center 222 to identify that at the next contact between the identified postage metering system 202 and the data center 222 the location inspection must take place (step S22). The data center 222 then generates a challenge card 272 which has a code 272a printed thereon (step S24). The specific code 272a is associated with the postage metering system serial number at the data center 222 and in the preferred embodiment the code 272a is an encrypted code. For example, the code 272a can be a message authentication code which is generated by applying via the cryptographic engine 266 an encryption algorithm such as DES to the postage metering system 202 serial number, the required inspection date, and the secret inspection key 264b.

Please replace the paragraph at page 6, lines 6 to 28 with the following paragraph:

The challenge card 272 is then mailed in a normal manner to the registered (licensed) postage metering system 202 address via the postal service distribution system 260 (step S26). Upon receipt of the challenge card 272, the user can manually enter the code 272a into the postage metering system 202 for its storage in memory 226 and future use as is described below (step S28). The inspection program 254 allows such entry to be made, such as for example, through the selection of a predesignated key on keyboard 208. In a preferred embodiment, upon entry of code 272a, the postage metering system utilizes the second cryptographic module 258 and the inspection key 256 (which is the same as key 264b) to decrypt